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By Michael Coleman

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Rep. Ben Ray Luján, D-N.M., is headed home for a monthlong recess, having passed his first bill through the U.S. House — a measure to secure permanent funding for research parks at national laboratories, including Los Alamos National Laboratory.

The Luján bill, which has yet to pass the Senate, passed the House 330-96 on July 20.

"These parks have been a critical resource to the national and the global environmental research community for decades, yet they have never had a clearly defined source of support in the Department of Energy," Luján said in a statement. "This bill finally addresses this issue, and provides important guidance for research, development, education and outreach activities at the parks."

Luján said the Los Alamos Environmental Research Park conducts environmental studies on issues including contaminant transport, woodland productivity and long-term climate change effects on the land.

The bill would secure a regular funding stream for the parks at LANL, as well as at national labs in Tennessee, Idaho, Nevada and South Carolina.

With consistent funding, the parks could expand their research activities, Luján said. The legislation would authorize \$5 million for each park for each of the fiscal years 2010 through 2014. Congress must still appropriate the money in a spending bill.